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CHAPTER I

AZURE MOUNTAIN AND EAR LAKE

131 A LITTLE TO the north of the main caravan route between China and Burma, in the mountains of western Yunnan, there is a strip of fertile rice land stretching northwards between T'ien Ts'ang Shan, the Celestial Azure Mountain, and Erh Hai, the Ear Lake. This plain of Ta Li is the home of the Min Chia people, one of the most numerous, and most civilised of the non-Chinese tribes of Yunnan. The Min Chia also occupy the valley of the Erh river flowing into the lake from the north, the hills on the eastern shore, and the valley of the Yang Pi river west of the Ts'ang Shan range. They are found in the region of Ho Ch'ing, north east of the Erh Hai lake, and in more scattered colonies as far west as the Mekong river. They thus occupy a wedge shaped territory which from the apex at the south end of Erh Hai lake to the base along the valley of the High Yang Tze near Shih Ku measures about one hundred miles from north to south, while the base of the triangle from Ho Ch'ing to the Mekong is approximately the same distance.

133 The whole region, part of the plateau of Yunnan, is extremely mountainous, the average altitude of the lake plateaux and valleys being from 6,000 to 8,000 ft., and the dividing ranges rising to 10,000 and 14,000 ft.

132 Although Yunnan is so high lying, the climate, as the meaning of the name—"south of the clouds"—implies, is mild and equable. The southern part of the province is within the tropics, but the country of the Min Chia, at latitude 25 North, lies just outside. Thus while the altitude moderates the heat of summer the sub-tropical latitude ensures a warm and sunny winter. Shade tem-

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132 perature in summer rarely exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and the light ground frosts of winter are not severe enough to prevent the cultivation of oranges at 7,000 feet above sea level. The permanent snow line in western Yunnan is well over 14,000 ft., the altitude of T'sang Shan behind Ta Li city, for this mountain is free from snow at the end of June.

Western Yunnan lies in the area subject to the south west monsoon from the Indian Ocean and therefore has a climate and seasons rather different from the rest of China. There are in fact only three seasons: the Dry season, from the end of October to the end of March, when temperature is moderate by day and cold at night, is not quite without rainfall; at intervals of perhaps three to four weeks the sky becomes overcast for two or three days, a light drizzle falls on the plateaux and this becomes snow above 9,000 ft. These few cold spells, recurring three or four times in the dry season, are the only "winter" Yunnan knows. The second season, the Hot, lasts from the end of March to the end of May, or middle of June. Apart from occasional thunder showers the weather is dry and the sky clear, but shade temperature can rise to 85 degrees Fahrenheit by day and rarely falls below 60 degrees at night. The Rainy season, which completes the cycle, begins with the breaking of the monsoon, which may be as early as mid-May, or as late as the end of June. It lasts until October, which can be a very wet month, and heavy rains in November are not unknown, especially west of the Mekong-Salween divide. During these months temperature is much lower than in April, and spells of continuous rain lasting a week or nine days occur. Few days are without a shower, although an occasional dry week breaks the monotonous succession of wet days. The weather in this season, with its low or moderate temperature is not unlike a bad English summer.

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AZURE MOUNTAIN AND EAR LAKE

Apart from the Rainy season, the climate of western /32
Yunnan with its lovely dry and sunny "winter" and its shorter warm spring is certainly one of the best in the world. There are no droughts; severe frosts are unknown, rainfall, though heavy in the wet season, is rarely excessive. These conditions, which are those of the Ta Li plain at 6,700 ft., are somewhat modified further north in the outlying regions of Min Chia occupation, the upper valley of the Yang Pi river and the district of Ho Ch'ing. Here the plateaux are higher, not under 8,000 ft., and the proximity of very high mountains on the border of Sikang or Chinese Tibet—the Yu Lung Shan range near Li Chiang exceeds 20,000 ft.—brings cold winds in winter and an increased rainfall at all seasons. Winter crops, which are grown on the Ta Li plain, cannot be raised sixty miles to the north at Chien Ch'uan in the upper Yang Pi valley, and heavy falls of snow can block passes at 12,000 ft. until April.

The plain of Ta Li, in reality a lake plateau, is a typical /33
example of a feature common to the whole of the Yunnan plateau region. Yunnan is geologically a shelf of the Tibetan massif jutting out far to the south east of the main Himalayan-Tibetan ranges. At the point where the main ranges, which to the north of India run roughly east to west, turn north to form the escarpment separating Tibet from China, there is a gap, as yet imperfectly mapped, through which the great rivers rising on the Tibetan plateau, break through southwards towards the sea. The Yunnan plateau divides these rivers, forcing the Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, and Salween westward to the Indian Ocean, while the Mekong and Yang Tze flow south and east to the China Sea. The main plateau lies between the Yang Tze to the north east and the Mekong to the south west; it drains into these two rivers and into the two which rise on the Yunnan plateau itself, the West River which reaches the sea at

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the lake shore as, having recently been reclaimed from the water, are raised too high to be reached by the irrigation channels. Rice is the main crop, the crop to which all other cultivation is subordinated, to grow which the topography of the plain has been laboriously remodelled.

In sharp contrast to the flat fertile western shore of the lake, fringed with willow groves and prosperous villages, the eastern shore rises abruptly from deep water, barren rocky hills rising to about 8,500 feet, or 2,500 above the lake. Not only the geology but also the climate is different on this side of the water. The prevailing Yunnan limestone here reappears, much weathered, and almost denuded of soil and vegetation. Much of the surface of these eastern hills is sharp weather-worn rock, with only small pockets of red clay scattered among the outcrops. The height of Ts'ang Shan to the west precipitates most of the rainfall, so that the region east of the lake is altogether dryer and more barren. Few trees grow on the eastern hills, and cultivation is only possible in the rare valleys running down to the lake. On the other hand the climate of these eastern hills is very suitable for fruit, and where sufficient soil exists there are highly productive orchards growing pears, peaches, and further east, citrus.

Towards the south-east corner of the lake the hills recede leaving the small plain of Feng Yi along the shore of the lake. This plain and the valleys running down from the Ting Hsi Ling range—the Red River-Mekong Divide—is the most southerly Min Chia territory, for east of the Tung Hsi Ling no Min Chia are found in the plain of Mi Tu.[1] The eastern border of the Min Chia country is somewhat

[1] There are in fact a few villages of Min Chia scattered about the Districts of Mi Tu and Hung Ai. These are certainly immigrants from the Ta Li plain, probably settled there since the Mohammedan rebellion of the eighteen-seventies.

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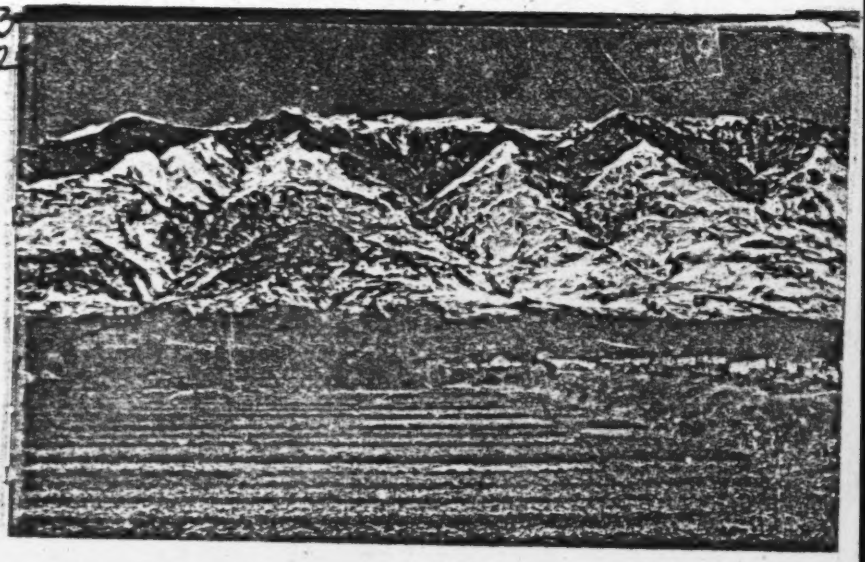
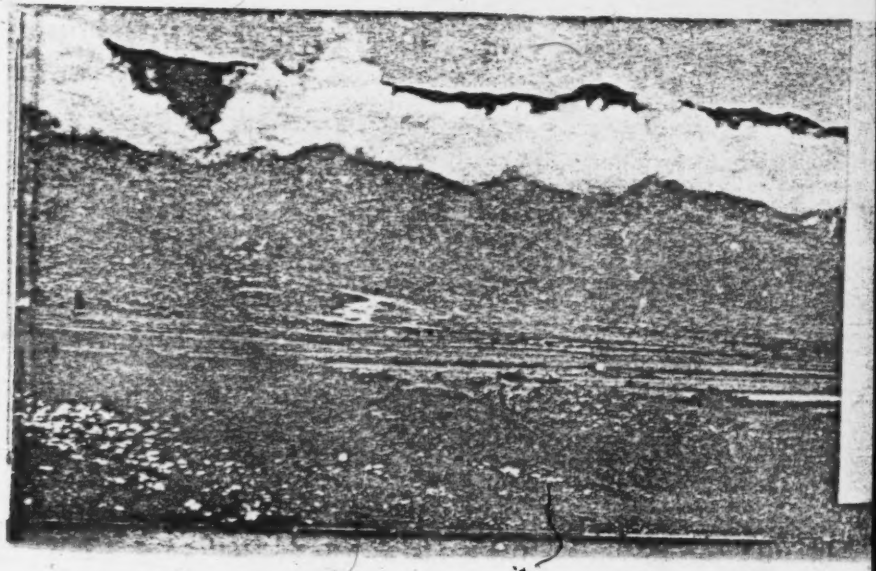


Ts'ang Shan mountains in winter.

Ts'ang Shan mountains in summer.



[Face p. 40]

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the forked top of the mast, the slightly greasy cowhide acting as a lubricant in the absence of pulleys. All ropes and sheets used on these boats are made of this material which is, of course, very strong and enduring. The larger boats have a cabin at the prow, which is raised well above the water line, and thus seems at a distance to be the poop, as in Chinese junks. On Erh Hai boats the necessity of shipping the heavy cumbersome rudder in shallow water makes it impossible to have the cabin at the poop. The whole boat can also be covered in rainy weather with curved mat roofs fitted on a bamboo frame, and is thus weatherproof, which makes boating by far the most comfortable way of travelling in the rainy season.

In a stiff breeze the Erh Hai boats can make very fast passages, and sail fairly close to the wind, while when there is nothing but the slightest of airs it is still possible to sail them owing to the very large spread of the towering mat sail. On the other hand, they are admitted to be dangerous in the violent squally winds which sweep across the lake in winter. These winds off the Ts'ang Shan range are a peculiar feature of the winter climate of Ta Li, due to the conjunction of a very high mountain and the lake. They come at irregular intervals, without warning, and the direction of the wind is unpredictable. At one moment the air is still under a cloudless sky, at the next, with a roar like an express train, the squall sweeps down across the plain raising clouds of dust, and then is gone. A few minutes later another squall approaches, from the opposite direction. In such weather sailing is very dangerous, and the boatmen either hoist only a small part of the sail, or prefer to punt along the shallows.

The larger Erh Hai boats are usually handled by a crew of three or four, who are the owner and his family. Apart from hoisting the sail, which is heavy work requiring all hands,

4: Liu K-4 (no date) 1944 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
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THE SOCIAL CUSTOMS OF THE TRIBES PEOPLE AS AFFECTED BY THEIR CLIMATIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT

A. THE CLIMATIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT OF LIFAN

131 Lifan ranks second in area among the 136 counties of Szechwan Province. It is situated at the northwest corner of Szechwan, with an indefinite boundary to the north in the wild expanse of grasslands. The Ta-chin River 大金川 (Big Gold River) acts as part of its western boundary, and also Sikang as its western neighbor. In the south, it is separated from Wenchwan 汶川 County by a continuous mountain range with its highest peak named Hsueh-lung-p'ao 雪隆包 or the Snow Dragon Mountain, because it is perpetually covered by snow. The Min River 岷江 serves as part of its eastern boundary, and a mountain range divides Lifan from Sungpan 松潘 in the northeast.

133 The county is divided into three natural regions according to the three large river systems: the Min in the east, the Ta-chin to the west and the Yellow River to the north. The three natural regions are really three drainage basins. They are the drainage basins of the Cha-ku 茶谷 and the Hei-shui 黑水 or Black Rivers as tributaries of the Min River in the southeast, the drainage basin of the So-mo 梭磨 River as tributary to the Ta-chin River in the west, and the drainage basin of the Mei River 梅 as tributary to the Yellow River in the north.

The topography, on the whole, may be classified as a dissected plateau, and it is sloping from the west to the east. The altitude of Wei-chow 威州, the eastern entrance of Lifan, is 4,500 ft. and that of Ma-tang 馬塘, about 150 miles west of Weichow, is over 10,000 ft. But this highland is badly dissected by streams and has formed many deep valleys. In the drainage basins of the Cha-ku and Black Rivers, the valleys are narrow and deep, while those in the other two drainage areas are broad and shallow. For example, while the So-mo and other valleys in the grasslands are all open U-shaped, those in the southeast area are entrenched V-shaped valleys.

The result is that very little flat land is to be found in the lower altitudes of the southeast. In the grasslands the lands are comparatively level, but the altitudes are high, and the temperature is low throughout the year. Even during the height of summer, the night temperatures are usually around 40°. During the day the temperature might rise to 70° or more. Thus the growing season is too short for the ordinary types of agricultural crops, and both the

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[P. 11]

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All the slopes that are below an altitude of 6,000 ft. belong to the arid zone, where cultivation without irrigation is difficult. Most of these slopes are barren or covered by only a thin mantle of scrub. At an altitude between 6,000 and 8,000 ft. is the semi-arid zone, where agriculture could be carried on without irrigation, but the situation is usually precarious. Unfortunately, most of the cultivable lands are situated in this zone. The dominating crops between 6,000 and 7,000 ft. are corn, beans, and wheat; and those grown between 7,000 and 8,000 ft. are mostly barley, oats, buckwheat, and potatoes.

From an altitude between 8,000 to over 9,000 ft. is the wet zone, and this is the forest zone. Above the forest zone is the sub-humid zone, and this is the grass land area where the high degree of wetness and the shortness of the growing season limit agriculture and favor the grazing of cattle. This is also the homeland of a great variety of medicinal herbs.

The limitations of relief and climate have in their turn affected the nature of the soil. Soil on the upper slopes, where agriculture is carried on, is subject to severe erosion; while soil on the valley bottoms is liable to be washed away by streams. Therefore, the most spectacular feature of the soil is that of instability. There is hardly any well-developed mature soil to be found anywhere. In the grasslands, the soil is better developed, but the temperature limits its utilization.

This is only a brief summary of the setting of the stage upon which a group of tribes people are carrying on their drama of life. Now, we will proceed to examine the tribes who are staged there.

B. THE TRIBES OF LI-FAN COUNTY

The total population of Li-fan county is about 80,000, which is about one-fourth the population of Chengtu. Of course there is no accurate census to tell the truth. This is only a rough estimate from the figures given by the Szechwan Commission of Education. Out of the total population, about one-eighth are Chinese and seven-eighths are tribes people. They are the Ch'iang羌, the Gia-rung嘉戎, the Fan番, and the Black River peoples. They are all of Tibetan descent, with a combined or fused Tibetan-Chinese culture at different stages of development.

The Ch'iang people used to occupy a much larger area than they do now. Archaeological finds indicate that they had spread as far north as Kansu before the Han dynasty. During the Ming dynasty, because they made trouble, the Tibetans were called in to conquer them, and finally there were cornered into a smaller and smaller area between the Chinese on the plains, and the Tibetans in the mountains. At present the Ch'iang people are on the verge of disappearing, and their culture is already half-forgotten. The Gia-rung people are the Tibetan conquerors who have taken to agriculture, and the Fan are the Tibetans who have come to stay in the grasslands and are still leading a nomadic type of life. The Black River people are a mixed people of Fan, Gia-rung and Ch'iang. They are half agricultural, but still rely on their cattle for much of their living.

5:Graham E-5 (1933, 1941)1942 AE3 Sino-Tibetan Border Peoples AE3
Ch'iang

133 cities and owns along the rivers are inhabited by Chinese. Some of the Ch'iang live in villages or farms in the valleys, but most of them live on farms or in fortified villages called Chai Tzu in the higher altitudes. There are extensive loess deposits that are so deep that they have been terraced and made into good farm lands.

137 Where the Ch'iang live most of the lower altitudes have few trees and little underbrush, a condition that is probably due to woodgatherers and much pasturing of sheep and goats. Higher up, above the homes and villages, are forests which are the source of
132 firewood and lumber. The climate in the lower altitudes is dryer than in the central part of Szechwan, where there is comparatively heavy rainfall. Occasional droughts and semi-droughts occur. The rainfall is heavier in the higher altitudes where the forests have not been exterminated.

101 Northwest of them are the Luh Hua and the Heh Shui, two
136 powerful tribes that, according to some reports, have never been conquered. Southwest of them are the Jia Rung. East of them are the Wa Ssu who helped the Chinese defeat the Ch'iang under Ch'ien-lung. In the high mountains are leopards, bears, and wild boars, and poisonous snakes are sometimes found in the fields and in the forests.

3. The People.

142 The Ch'iang are yellow or brown in color, differing so little from the Chinese that when they are dressed in Chinese clothing it is difficult to distinguish them from the Chinese people. The average height of the men is about 164 or 165 centimeters, the average cephalic index about eighty, the eyes are dark brown, the hair dark brown or black and generally straight, the nose is a trifle narrower than that of the Chinese, and the epicanthic fold is often lacking. There are probably no more convex or "Roman" noses among them than among other eastern Asiatic races. It is thought that they are a branch of the Burma-Tibetan race.

165 The Ch'iang are a hardy people. Both men and women are strong and industrious. The death rate, however, is very high, due to an unbalanced diet, meagre knowledge of hygiene, and the absence of trained physicians and good medicine. The writer took the records of about forty families, and found the death-rate to be six hundred and twenty-six per thousand. It is probable that some deaths that occurred within a short time after birth were not reported.

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133 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY--altitude above sea level; relief (e.g., hills, mountains, plateaus, passes); bodies of water (e.g., lakes, rivers, arms of the sea, swamps); subsurface water; character of seacoast and adjacent marine floor; tides and currents; floods; areas of volcanic and seismic activity; etc. See also:

Land and water transport 49, 50
Water supply 312
Routes 487
Seismic and volcanic disasters 731
Ethnogeography 823

113. 133. 177. 621. 105

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Minchia

[For information pertaining to the distribution, acculturation, and social organization of the Minchia see 2: Wiens, AF17 South China, category 116, Pp. 319-321. For a cultural summary of the Pai-Man peoples (including the Minchia) see ibid., category 116, Pp. 53-54. --Analyst]

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CHAPTER I

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The plain of Ta Li, in reality a lake plateau, is a typical /33
example of a feature common to the whole of the Yunnan plateau region. Yunnan is geologically a shelf of the Tibetan massif jutting out far to the south east of the main Himalayan-Tibetan ranges. At the point where the main ranges, which to the north of India run roughly east to west, turn north to form the escarpment separating Tibet from China, there is a gap, as yet imperfectly mapped, through which the great rivers rising on the Tibetan plateau, break through southwards towards the sea. The Yunnan plateau divides these rivers, forcing the Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, and Salween westward to the Indian Ocean, while the Mekong and Yang Tze flow south and east to the China Sea. The main plateau lies between the Yang Tze to the north east and the Mekong to the south west; it drains into these two rivers and into the two which rise on the Yunnan plateau itself, the West River which reaches the sea at

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/33 Canton, and the Red River which flows past Hanoi to the coast of Indo-China at Haiphong.

The plateau is ribbed from north to south by continuous ranges of steep and well wooded mountains divided by narrow valleys, which often become inaccessible gorges, but which here and there widen out into lake plateaux, some still occupied in part by large sheets of water, others now a fertile plain from which the lake has wholly drained away. These plateaux, the only areas where large scale cultivation and a numerous population are possible, are separated by mountain tracts virtually uninhabited, and still covered on their lower slopes with pine forest and scrub, on their crests with a dense rain forest of conifers, bamboo, rhododendron and large deciduous trees. Such ranges form barriers cutting off one lake plateau from another by as much as fifty miles of wilderness. In these valleys peoples of widely different culture, race and language for long lived in virtual isolation, which even to-day, after six centuries of Chinese rule, is but slightly disturbed by contacts with the outer world.

Between the Ts'ang Shan range—the Azure Mountain, and the Erh Hai—the Ear Lake, is one such plateau, thirty-five miles long, but only two to three miles wide. This is the Ta Li plain, so called from the city of Ta Li which stands two miles from the lake shore under the highest point of the towering Ts'ang Shan range, which rises 14,000 ft. above sea level, a full 7,000 ft. above the plain. The plain lies north and south, the mountain to the west, the lake to the east, beyond which there rises from the water itself a lower line of mountains enclosing the plateau on all sides.

At both the northern and southern ends of the plain the lake comes close to the base of the mountain narrowing the approaches to the plain to two famous passes, the Dragon's

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Head Pass (Lung T'ou Kuan) at the northern end, where the ancient fortress of Shang Kuan, the Upper Fort, stands between the shore of the lake and a deep, impassable ravine, running up the flank of the mountain. An enemy coming down on Ta Li from the north by way of the Erh river valley could only reach the plain by forcing this strong position. At the southern extremity of the plain, nearly 35 miles from Shang Kuan, the outflow from the lake forces its way through a cleft in the Ts'ang Shan range, a passage so narrow that the stream is at one point bridged by a huge boulder wedged between the cliffs. This is the Dragon's Tail Pass (Lung Wei Kuan) through which passes the ancient caravan road to Burma, and to-day the just completed motor road. Where the outflow stream narrows at the mouth of this pass the swift current is crossed by a fine stone bridge, defended on both banks by the double fortress of Hsia Kuan, the Lower Fort, and this bridge and fortress is the only means of access to the Ta Li plain from the south and west.

The lake itself, roughly ear-shaped, thirty miles long and from two to five miles across, is deep and navigable, providing an easy means of communication from one end of the plain to the other, and also with the eastern shore, where mule paths wind through the rocky hills to the valleys leading to the High Yang Tze. Hsia Kuan, at the Dragon's Tail Pass, commands not only the east-west caravan road to Burma, but also the north-south road along the Ta Li plain, which is part of the principal caravan route between Eastern Tibet and the tea growing districts of southern Yunnan. It therefore has had for centuries a commercial importance equal to its strategic value.

To the west the immense wall of the Ts'ang Shan range blocks all access to the plain. Only one narrow track winds over the mountain and this, too narrow and steep for mules,

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133 and blocked by snow for six months of the year, is only used by wood cutters and charcoal burners. Elsewhere the knife edge crest of the range is so precipitous and so overgrown with dense rain forest as to be inaccessible. At a few points it is possible to reach the crest, but the western face being more precipitous than the eastern, it is never possible to cross the range.

162 633 Ten miles up the plain from Hsia Kuan is the city of Ta Li, capital of the *hsien* or county of the same name, and an important military and governmental centre for a wider region. Ta Li itself, a city of about 20,000 inhabitants,[1] is an ancient place, the capital in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. of the Kingdom of Nan Chao, which covered the greater part of the modern Yunnan province. As the centre of government it has a mixed population including Chinese Mohammedans, formerly more numerous than at present, immigrant Chinese from Ssu Ch'uan province, and mixed families of Chinese and Min Chia descent, but at least one third of the inhabitants of the city are Min Chias. The villages of the plain, of which there are more than one hundred, are entirely Min Chia, apart from a small number of Mohammedan villages.

133 The plain of Ta Li, though the most easily defended, is not one of the largest or richest of the lake plateaux of Yunnan. Approximately 100 square miles in area, it is much smaller than that of Yunnanfu (or K'un Ming) in the east of the province, or than the plain of Pao Shan to the west, from which the ancient lake has now disappeared. Cramped between the mountain and the lake the Ta Li plateau is nowhere more than three miles wide, and in many places the cultivable area is much narrower. On the other hand the high range to the west ensures a constant water supply, for

[1] No census exists, but this figure is that generally given by inhabitants and officials of the place, and accords with a personal estimate.

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133 the mountain streams which discharge into the lake are perennial, which is not the case on plateaux bordered by lower hills. Against this advantage must be set the strong winds which prevail in winter, due to the juxtaposition of a high mountain and a large sheet of water.

The area of good land is also diminished by the wide "fans" of rock-encumbered soil discharged by the mountain torrents at the point where they debouch on to the plain. This accumulation of boulders and detritus forms a continuous belt about a mile wide of rocky sloping land along the foot of the mountain. It has some value as grazing
312 land, but cannot be cultivated. As the streams leave the lower slopes they are carefully canalised and broken up into an infinity of small channels which distribute water to every plot of ground between the hill slopes and the lake shore. This work of irrigation, undoubtedly of great antiquity, has transformed what must once have been a marsh into a carefully graded series of terraces sloping almost imperceptibly to the lake. As a result the Min Chia farmer is really independent of the monsoon, for he can flood his rice fields from this system of water channels, fed by the perennial streams from Ts'ang Shan.

312 Curiously enough it is the land nearest the shore of the
134 lake which has most to fear from a late monsoon. The level of the lake varies as much as six feet between the dry season and the end of the rainy season, consequently in spring the water is some four to five feet below the level of the adjoining rice fields, which cannot be flooded from this source. As the fields nearer the mountain slopes tend to absorb all or most of the water from the mountain torrents, it sometimes happens that if the monsoon is late the fields nearest to the lake cannot be planted with rice until as much as three weeks after those nearer the mountain. The area adjoining the lake is further subject to some danger of

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312 flooding in very wet years, when the water of the lake, un-
134 able to escape through the very narrow passage of the Dragon's Tail Pass, overflows on to the flat western shore. Unless the flood becomes so deep as to cover the ears of rice, this does no harm, and such exceptional depths are rare. Yet on account of these two risks the land nearest the lake shore, in appearance the best on the plain, is in fact of less value than fields nearer the mountain slopes.

134 Unlike almost all other parts of Yunnan the soil of the Ta Li plain is not the red clay associated with the prevailing Yunnan limestone rocks, but a heavy black soil due to the fact that Ts'ang Shan is an upthrust of granite breaking
133 through the limestone cap of the Yunnan plateau. This geological peculiarity has one serious disadvantage, the frequency of severe earthquakes on the Ta Li plain. Slight shocks are common in the dry season, especially after one of the winter spells of drizzle, but a major earthquake in the spring of 1925 not only destroyed most of the city of Ta Li but caused much greater havoc and a very heavy loss of life in the lakeside villages, where a wave from the lake did further damage. Local records mention other severe earthquakes in previous centuries, but for many years before 1925 no serious shock had occurred, nor has there been a major earthquake since that date.

311 Apart from a narrow belt of willow groves along the lake shore, where flooding is usual, the entire surface of the plain is under cultivation. The villages as far as possible are built on the shore itself, or on the lowest slopes of the mountain, to free as much land as possible for the cultiva-
[491] tion of rice. Even the main caravan road, a stone-paved path about six feet wide, skirts the slopes of the mountain, and the paths leading to villages and fields are narrow and follow the dykes along irrigation channels. Very little land is devoted to market gardening, usually only such patches by

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the lake shore as, having recently been reclaimed from the water, are raised too high to be reached by the irrigation channels. Rice is the main crop, the crop to which all other cultivation is subordinated, to grow which the topography of the plain has been laboriously remodelled.

In sharp contrast to the flat fertile western shore of the lake, fringed with willow groves and prosperous villages, the eastern shore rises abruptly from deep water, barren rocky hills rising to about 8,500 feet, or 2,500 above the lake. Not only the geology but also the climate is different on this side of the water. The prevailing Yunnan limestone here reappears, much weathered, and almost denuded of soil and vegetation. Much of the surface of these eastern hills is sharp weather-worn rock, with only small pockets of red clay scattered among the outcrops. The height of Ts'ang Shan to the west precipitates most of the rainfall, so that the region east of the lake is altogether dryer and more barren. Few trees grow on the eastern hills, and cultivation is only possible in the rare valleys running down to the lake. On the other hand the climate of these eastern hills is very suitable for fruit, and where sufficient soil exists there are highly productive orchards growing pears, peaches, and further east, citrus.

Towards the south-east corner of the lake the hills recede leaving the small plain of Feng Yi along the shore of the lake. This plain and the valleys running down from the Ting Hsi Ling range—the Red River-Mekong Divide—is the most southerly Min Chia territory, for east of the Tung Hsi Ling no Min Chia are found in the plain of Mi Tu.[1] The eastern border of the Min Chia country is somewhat

[1] There are in fact a few villages of Min Chia scattered about the Districts of Mi Tu and Hung Ai. These are certainly immigrants from the Ta Li plain, probably settled there since the Mohammedan rebellion of the eighteen-seventies.

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133 undefined, for while the plain of Pin Ch'uan, beyond the
162 eastern hills, is, as the name suggests, inhabited by immigrant Ssu Ch'uanese, the hills themselves are for the most
[792] part uninhabited. The villages on the lands of the large and famous monastery of Chu Sheng Ssu on Chi Tsu Shan, the highest mountain of the eastern range, which is over 11,000 feet, are inhabited by Min Chia, though the monks themselves are for the most part Chinese from far off provinces, and the place, to complete the ethnographic puzzle, is a centre of pilgrimage for the Tibetans.

To the north of the lake the rich valley of the Erh river, which fills the lake, and the small plain of Erh Yuan—"Source of the Erh"—are both Min Chia country, and though higher than the Ta Li plain, have a milder climate, being sheltered from the strong winds off Ts'ang Shan.
[317] The plain of Erh Yuan, also a minor lake plateau, has numerous hot springs strongly impregnated with sulphur, which is extracted in a primitive manner and sold as a medi-
[197] cine. Northwards yet, beyond a range of 9,000 ft. mountains, the valley of the Yang Pi river and its lake plateau of Chien Ch'uan forms the last important settlement of Min Chia, who, however, speak a dialect of that language which is not easily intelligible to the men of Ta Li. In the short distance of sixty miles which separates the two plateaux, the isolating factors of bad communications and mountains, have effectively divided the peoples of Ta Li and Chien Ch'uan.

361 Although the Min Chia are surrounded by other peoples, Chinese immigrants such as the Ssu Ch'uanese settlers to the east in the plain of Pin Ch'uan, or non-Chinese peoples, such as the Na Khi (or Mo So) in the Li Chiang district to the north, they can hardly be said to be in close contact with these neighbours, since the centres of population in the rich plateaux are separated by wide tracts of almost

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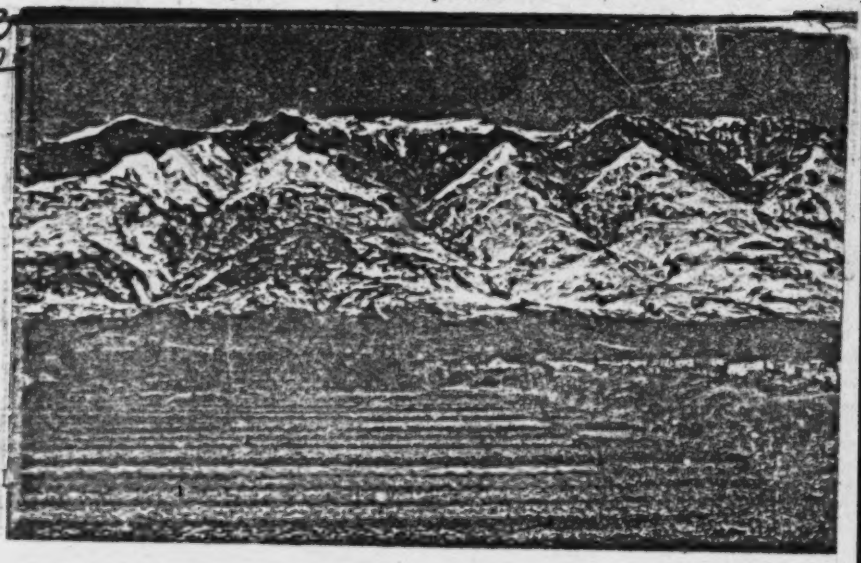
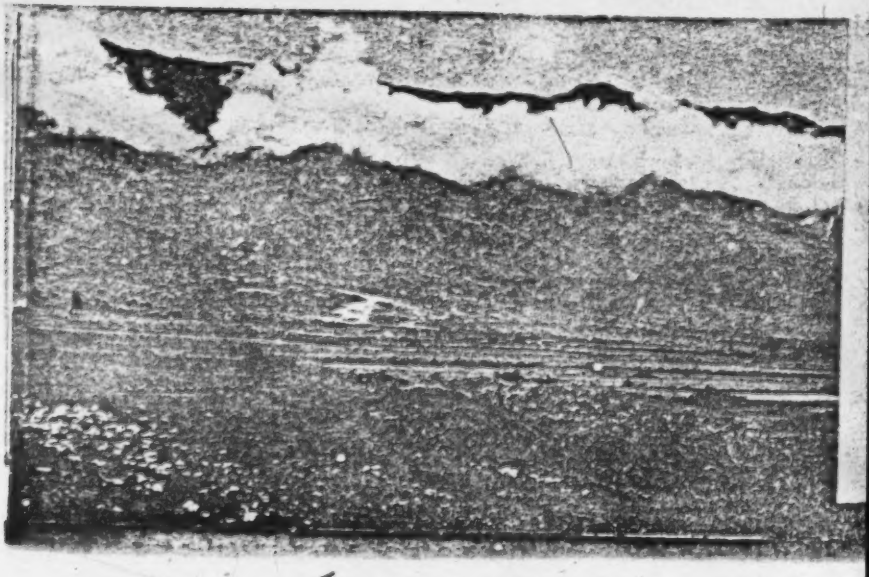


Ts'ang Shan mountains in winter.

Ts'ang Shan mountains in summer.



[Face p. 40]

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491 morning and descending to another valley in the afternoon.
This is because the roads going from east to west have to
491 cross an endless series of steep ranges which run from north
133 to south. It might be hoped that if one travelled northwards
or southwards one would therefore be able to follow the
valleys, but this is rarely the case. The river valleys of
Yunnan are for the most part gorges so narrow as to be im-
practicable, only opening out into a lake plateau at wide
intervals. Consequently, if one travels from north to south
it is not possible to follow the valley down stream, because
it soon becomes a gorge. The road therefore climbs up to
the crest of the range, follows along it until the next lake
plateau is reached, and then descends again.

491 Consequently the average stage of about twenty miles
137 falls into four well-marked divisions. Firstly, two or three
miles across the flat lake plateau between the rose hedges
and rice fields until the second stage, the ascent, is reached.
This is usually long and steep, a twisting track, once stone
steps, now broken into a slide of rubble, rocks, and—after
rain—slippery stretches of red mud. On both sides of the
track the uncultivated slopes of the mountains are covered
with scrub of azaleas, winter green, wild tea, and other
flowering shrubs, shaded by a sparse forest of pine trees.
As the road winds higher this forest gets taller and denser
until, about the 10,000 ft. level, which on most roads is
the crest, the pines give place to chestnuts and very tall
well-grown non-deciduous trees of the ilex type, called
Ch'un, beneath which there is a dense growth of rhododen-
dron and bamboo. The tops of the mountains are often flat,
with open grassy glades and running cold streams among the
forest, and such a place is chosen for the midday halt, where
the horses can graze.

491 The descent in the afternoon is made through similar
forest, although sometimes the east side of a mountain will

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On the Burma Road. Yang Lao Kuan pass.

Min Chia junks on Erh Hai lake.

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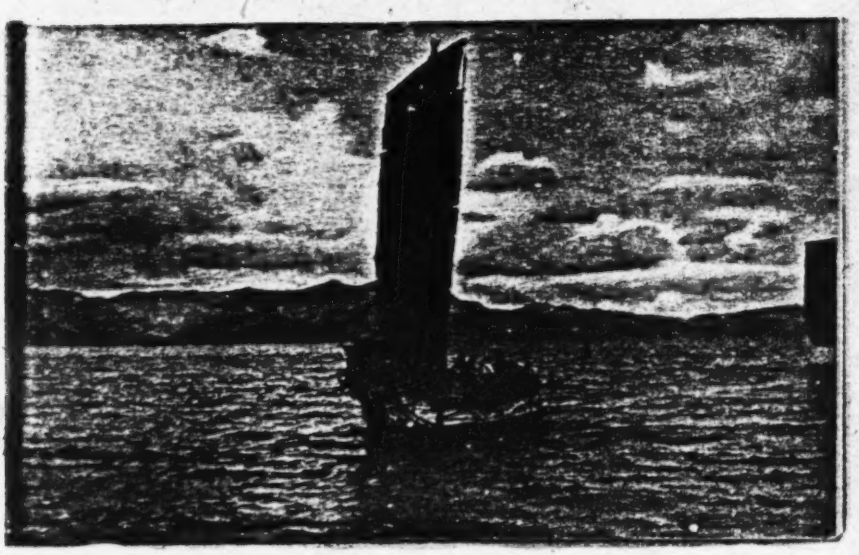

[Face p. 198]

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
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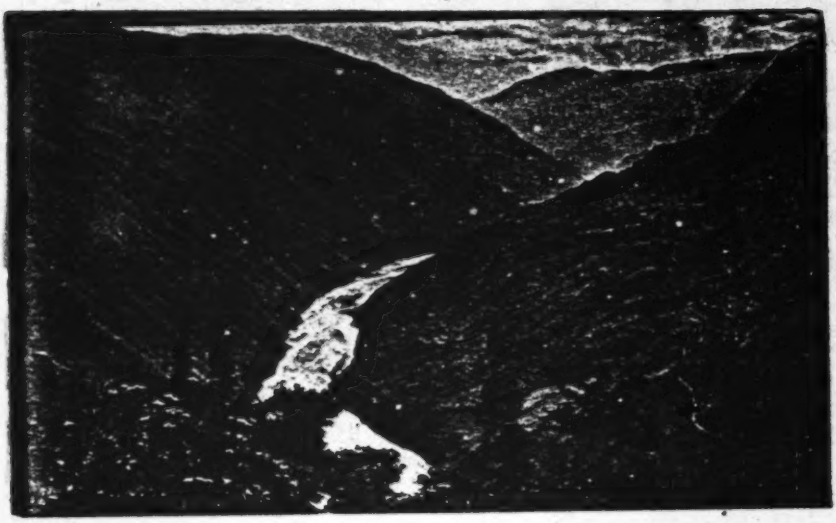

The gorge of the Mekong.

The eastern shore of Erh Hai lake.

[Face p. 222]

4: Liu K-4 (no date) 1944 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
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THE SOCIAL CUSTOMS OF THE TRIBES PEOPLE AS AFFECTED BY THEIR CLIMATIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT

A. THE CLIMATIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT OF LIFAN

131 Lifan ranks second in area among the 136 counties of Szechwan Province. It is situated at the northwest corner of Szechwan, with an indefinite boundary to the north in the wild expanse of grasslands. The Ta-chin River 大金川 (Big Gold River) acts as part of its western boundary, and also Sikang as its western neighbor. In the south, it is separated from Wenchwan 汶川 County by a continuous mountain range with its highest peak named Hsueh-lung-p'ao 雪龍袍 or the Snow Dragon Mountain, because it is perpetually covered by snow. The Min River 岷江 serves as part of its eastern boundary, and a mountain range divides Lifan from Sungpan 松潘 in the northeast.

●133 The county is divided into three natural regions according to the three large river systems: the Min in the east, the Ta-chin to the west and the Yellow River to the north. The three natural regions are really three drainage basins. They are the drainage basins of the Cha-ku 雜谷 and the Hei-shui 黑水 or Black Rivers as tributaries of the Min River in the southeast, the drainage basin of the So-mo 梭磨 River as tributary to the Ta-chin River in the west, and the drainage basin of the Mei River 梅 as tributary to the Yellow River in the north.

The topography, on the whole, may be classified as a dissected plateau, and it is sloping from the west to the east. The altitude of Wei-chow 威州, the eastern entrance of Lifan, is 4,500 ft. and that of Ma-tang 馬塘, about 150 miles west of Weichow, is over 10,000 ft. But this highland is badly dissected by streams and has formed many deep valleys. In the drainage basins of the Cha-ku and Black Rivers, the valleys are narrow and deep, while those in the other two drainage areas are broad and shallow. For example, while the So-mo and other valleys in the grasslands are all open U-shaped, those in the southeast area are entrenched V-shaped valleys.

The result is that very little flat land is to be found in the lower altitudes of the southeast. In the grasslands the lands are comparatively level, but the altitudes are high, and the temperature is low throughout the year. Even during the height of summer, the night temperatures are usually around 40°. [132] 241 133 During the day the temperature might rise to 70° or more. Thus the growing season is too short for the ordinary types of agricultural crops, and both the

4: Liu K-4 (no date) 1944 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
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relief and the low temperatures limit the cultivation on any large scale. Most of the cultivated lands are located in the southeast, in the drainage area of the Cha-ku and the Black Rivers, on gentle slopes between an altitude of 5,000 to 9,000 ft.

Roughly speaking, over 50% of the total agricultural food stuffs produced in Lifan are produced along the Cha-Ku valley, between Weichow and Cha-ku-nao 茶谷脑, a distance of not more than 50 miles. And these crops are mostly grown on slopes rather than on alluvial plains at the valley bottoms. The total area of alluvial plains at the valley bottom between Weichow and Cha-ku-nao is smaller in area than the cultivated mountain slopes of even one mountain settlement, as for instance Chia-shan-chai 佳山寨. This shows the insignificance of alluvial lowlands and the importance of slope cultivation in the region. Besides the Cha-ku valley, the Black River valley which is the other tributary to the Min also has some fertile slope lands under cultivation. As all the valleys are separated by high mountains with steep slopes, the cultivated area on slopes is nowhere very extensive.

Besides the topographic limits of land utilization, climatic influences are also very strong. Though the climate varies from valley to valley, yet it is controlled by definite climatic laws. In regions where the altitude is below 6,000 ft., the summer temperature can go up as high as 86° F (30° C) and the minimum temperature during the hottest month, August, could go down to 57° F (14° C). On the average, the temperatures for six months, from the middle of October to the middle of April, are below the critical temperature for vegetation growth. That leaves a growing season of only about six months.

In the grasslands the annual average temperature is below 50° F. Even during the height of summer, the maximum temperature goes only as high as 74° or 75° during the day, and can go as far down as 33° F. The growing season is thus shortened to less than four months.

As far as moisture is concerned, the slopes that are below an altitude of 6,000 ft., being hidden between high mountain walls, are usually very dry, because little moisture can reach them. The average relative humidity for August last summer was below 50%. Between an altitude of 6,000 to 7,000, due to the orographic effect of air that is rising along the slopes, the average relative humidity for August last summer was below 60%, while the slopes above 7,000 ft. during the same period had an average relative humidity of about 80%. Thus during the severe drought in the summer, while the crops on the lower slopes were all withered and with no hope for any harvest, the oats, potatoes, and barley were flourishing on the upper slopes. The relative humidity is still higher as the altitude goes higher until it reaches the altitude of about 10,000 feet, when it begins to decrease again. Therefore, according to moisture distribution, the mountainous country is classified into four zones: the arid zone, the semi-arid zone, the humid zone, and the sub-humid zone.

4: Liu K-4 (no date) 1944 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
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All the slopes that are below an altitude of 6,000 ft. belong to the arid zone, where cultivation without irrigation is difficult. Most of these slopes are barren or covered by only a thin mantle of scrub. At an altitude between 6,000 and 8,000 ft. is the semi-arid zone, where agriculture could be carried on without irrigation, but the situation is usually precarious. Unfortunately, most of the cultivable lands are situated in this zone. The dominating crops between 6,000 and 7,000 ft. are corn, beans, and wheat; and those grown between 7,000 and 8,000 ft. are mostly barley, oats, buckwheat, and potatoes.

From an altitude between 8,000 to over 9,000 ft. is the wet zone, and this is the forest zone. Above the forest zone is the sub-humid zone, and this is the grass land area where the high degree of wetness and the shortness of the growing season limit agriculture and favor the grazing of cattle. This is also the homeland of a great variety of medicinal herbs.

The limitations of relief and climate have in their turn affected the nature of the soil. Soil on the upper slopes, where agriculture is carried on, is subject to severe erosion; while soil on the valley bottoms is liable to be washed away by streams. Therefore, the most spectacular feature of the soil is that of instability. There is hardly any well-developed mature soil to be found anywhere. In the grasslands, the soil is better developed, but the temperature limits its utilization.

This is only a brief summary of the setting of the stage upon which a group of tribes people are carrying on their drama of life. Now, we will proceed to examine the tribes who are staged there.

B. THE TRIBES OF LI-FAN COUNTY

The total population of Li-fan county is about 80,000, which is about one-fourth the population of Chengtu. Of course there is no accurate census to tell the truth. This is only a rough estimate from the figures given by the Szechwan Commission of Education. Out of the total population, about one-eighth are Chinese and seven-eighths are tribes people. They are the Ch'iang羌, the Gia-rung嘉戎, the Fan番, and the Black River peoples. They are all of Tibetan descent, with a combined or fused Tibetan-Chinese culture at different stages of development.

The Ch'iang people used to occupy a much larger area than they do now. Archaeological finds indicate that they had spread as far north as Kansu before the Han dynasty. During the Ming dynasty, because they made trouble, the Tibetans were called in to conquer them, and finally there were cornered into a smaller and smaller area between the Chinese on the plains, and the Tibetans in the mountains. At present the Ch'iang people are on the verge of disappearing, and their culture is already half-forgotten. The Gia-rung people are the Tibetan conquerors who have taken to agriculture, and the Fan are the Tibetans who have come to stay in the grasslands and are still leading a nomadic type of life. The Black River people are a mixed people of Fan, Gia-rung and Ch'iang. They are half agricultural, but still rely on their cattle for much of their living.

5:Graham E-5 (1933, 1941)1942 AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3
Ch'iang

Far away there were once two nations, *Tzu La* and *Gu La*. There was a war between them, and as a result *Gu La* (the Ch'iang people) was defeated, and the Ch'iang migrated travelling a year and several months before they reached the place where they now live. On the way they crossed a river, using round boats made of cowskins. A boat leaked, and the sacred books got wet. While the books were being dried on the shore some goats came and ate them. Therefore there are no written sacred books, and their contents are handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. 174

When the Ch'iang reached West China, the Chinese and the Jung 戎 were at war. The Jung were defeated and retired to Isagulow. The Chinese retired to Kuanhsien leaving the territory in between vacant, so the Ch'iang came in and occupied it. At that time the Ch'iang herded sheep and goats and raised wheat, but not corn. Later under Ch'ien-lung (A. D. 1737-1795) the Wa Ssu came from Wu Ssu Tsang in Tibet and helped the Chinese in a war that lasted twelve years. There was a great battle at Wei Kuan (維關), where a person can go from the top of the mountain to the river without being seen by the enemy. The Ch'iang were defeated, and the Wa Ssu were given the territory they now occupy, between the Ch'iang and the Chinese

There is probably both history and tradition in this legend. Since there are several tribes in Burma that have the tradition of a lost book, we can assume that this part of the story is legendary.

2. The Country.

The Ch'iang, at least that part of the Ch'iang people that we are studying, inhabit a region along the T'o and the Min Rivers, approximately between the 31st and 32nd degrees longitude and the 103rd and 104th degrees latitude. From T'ieh Ch'i 鐵溪 on the north to So Ch'iao which is twenty li down the Min River from Wen Ch'uan and from points east of Mou Chow and Wei Chow to about twenty li up the river from Li Fan. Formerly they extended southward as far as Yueh Hsi and northward into Kansu and Shansi. The rivers and valleys are very narrow, and the mountainsides generally very steep. The main cities are Wen Ch'uan, Wei Chow, Li Fan, and Mou Chow. The rivers are from four to seven thousand feet above sea level. The surrounding mountains rise in some places to an altitude of sixteen or seventeen thousand feet. The 131 133

5:Graham E-5 (1933, 1941)1942 AE3 Sino-Tibetan Border Peoples AE3
Ch'iang

133 cities and owns along the rivers are inhabited by Chinese. Some of the Ch'iang live in villages or farms in the valleys, but most of them live on farms or in fortified villages called Chai Tzu in the higher altitudes. There are extensive loess deposits that are so deep that they have been terraced and made into good farm lands.

137 Where the Ch'iang live most of the lower altitudes have few trees and little underbrush, a condition that is probably due to woodgatherers and much pasturing of sheep and goats. Higher up, above the homes and villages, are forests which are the source of

132 firewood and lumber. The climate in the lower altitudes is dryer than in the central part of Szechwan, where there is comparatively heavy rainfall. Occasional droughts and semi-droughts occur. The rainfall is heavier in the higher altitudes where the forests have not been exterminated.

101 Northwest of them are the Tuh Hua and the Heh Shui, two

136 powerful tribes that, according to some reports, have never been conquered. Southwest of them are the Jia Rung. East of them are the Wa Ssu who helped the Chinese defeat the Ch'iang under Ch'ien-lung. In the high mountains are leopards, bears, and wild boars, and poisonous snakes are sometimes found in the fields and in the forests.

3. The People.

142 The Ch'iang are yellow or brown in color, differing so little from the Chinese that when they are dressed in Chinese clothing it is difficult to distinguish them from the Chinese people. The average height of the men is about 164 or 165 centimeters, the average cephalic index about eighty, the eyes are dark brown, the hair dark brown or black and generally straight, the nose is a trifle narrower than that of the Chinese, and the epicanthic fold is often lacking. There are probably no more convex or "Roman" noses among them than among other eastern Asiatic races. It is thought that they are a branch of the Burma-Tibetan race.

165 The Ch'iang are a hardy people. Both men and women are strong and industrious. The death rate, however, is very high, due to an unbalanced diet, meagre knowledge of hygiene, and the absence of trained physicians and good medicine. The writer took the records of about forty families, and found the death-rate to be six hundred and twenty-six per thousand. It is probable that some deaths that occurred within a short time after birth were not reported.

114 connection I should like to mention above all the comprehensive work of Father M. Hermanns (2): Die Nomaden von Tibet, and the

2. Hermanns 3).

excellent portrayal by R. B. Ekvall (3) of the sociological and eco-

3. Ekvall 4).

nomic conditions of the region I visited. The book by Hermanns gives a wide survey of the culture of the Tibetan nomads; the work by Ekvall is rich in factual material and discusses the cultural relationships between Chinese, Mohammedans, and sedentary and nomadic Tibetans. This is extremely interesting for the ethno-sociologist.

The authors of these two books had the advantage of living for many years among the Tibetans and of speaking their language. I can present only a modest supplement to their work by setting forth
• 124 my observations of a single tent camp. Besides my assistant Mr. Wu Hsin-wei, an experienced ethnological field worker, I was fortunate enough to have as traveling companions an excellent interpreter for Tibetan and a reliable Tibetan stableman who spoke Chinese. My interpreter was a Chinese trader who lived in He-tso, the Chinese and Mohammedan settlement of some size nearest the area I visited. As a young man he had been forced into the region of the Tibetan nomads, following a Mohammedan uprising, and he lived and traded among these people for many years. He was particularly friendly with a few of the Tibetans in the camp I visited. He was a keen observer and was apparently himself interested in the life of the nomads. He was always willing to answer my questions as objectively as was possible for a simple trader, to arrange introductions /2a/ with Tibetan informants, and to interpret patiently.

• 133 The landscape and climate of the Tibetan steppes have often been depicted by more competent persons, so that a description will not be necessary. For the author, the weeks he spent in a small tent adjoining the camp of the Mewu-Fantzu were not only a period of ethnological field work, but also an inspiring experience of nature. In the height of summer the steppe is a gay carpet of flowers, especially edelweiss, luminous blue gentian, yellow and red pedicularis. On the heights between the shallow, narrow valleys there is a limitless vista on all sides, when it is not broken by individual steep, light-colored limestone massifs rising up more than 5,000 meters, their peaks often covered with freshly fallen

snow. Toward the south, the horizon is blocked by mighty Min-shan, a chain of Matterhorns with peaks almost 6,000 meters high, with glaciers and the imposing notch of the "Stone Gate" (Shih-men) which leads over into Szechuan. There are memories of distant rides on horseback, of meditative walks beneath the deep blue sky of the alps; or of dark, storm-driven rain clouds in the solemn peace of the highlands, the quiet broken only by the song of the lark, the shrill cry of the falcon or the deep croak of the raven and the lively whistle of the ground hog. The vast steppe, utterly deserted by man, is animated now and then by herds of gazelles, a few hovering vultures or eagles high in the heavens. Or one sees a narrow valley with a row of black tents and groups of horsemen, dotted with black yak and white sheep herds, the whole strangely enlivened by the low barking of dogs and the bleating of yaks and sheep.

/3/ In earlier times Tibetan tribes were scattered far beyond the borders of present-day Tibet toward the west, as far as the provinces of Szechuan and Kansu, probably even throughout Shensi to Honan. Even today there are Tibetan tribes in Szechuan and Kansu, but culturally they have been more strongly influenced by the Chinese, often having also adopted the Chinese language. Here we find all kinds of transitions between nearly pure Tibetans and those that have been almost completely assimilated by the Chinese. In the course of the last 100 years the boundary between the provinces of Szechuan and Kansu on the one hand and Western Tibet, that is to say, the present outlying Chinese provinces of Hsik'ang and Ch'inghai (Kokonor), on the other, has been shifted several times. In Kansu the Chinese government was impelled to do this because of the gradual advance of the Chinese toward the West, and also because of difficult relationships with a third, very restless element of the population of Kansu, the Mohammedans. Although the latter have adopted the Chinese language, dress and customs, they have by no means been assimilated by the Chinese, but are consciously opposed to them. Anthropologically they can be included among the Turkish peoples of Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang). The Chinese and Mohammedan settlements in Kansu have pushed on as far as the Chinese farmer has found proper conditions - especially on loess soil - for the type of agriculture he has practised since ancient times. In places where the bottom of the valley lends itself to irrigation, the river valleys have become rich oases with luxuriant vegetable and fruit cultures

311 in between the dry, treeless mountains. But the mountainous country, too, can feed the tough and industrious population of Chinese and Mohammedan farmers, provided there are /4/ peaceful political conditions and a settled administration, although naturally these highlands (1500 - 3000 meters) cannot be nearly as densely populated as the lower, warmer loess regions of central and eastern North China.

● 133 South of the loess country in Kansu the boundary toward Szechuan
177 is formed by a mighty mountain range over 5,000 meters high, a part of the K'un-lun system. From the north, only unimportant branches of Chinese culture have penetrated into these mountains, since here the conditions necessary for Chinese agriculture are lacking. Neither the narrow valleys that have eaten into limestone, primary rock or granite, nor the undulating uplands more than 3,000
[361] meters high are suitable for the Chinese farmer. Sedentary Tibetans or Fantzu (following the Kansu colloquial usage, we shall subsequently refer to the "Tibetans" as "Fantzu") live in the valleys and in the
[241] lower parts of the highland. Even though the summers here are short, crops of Tibetan barley (ch'ing-ku), peas and rape are relatively good. Thus they are able to provide themselves as well as the nomad tribes
231 living still higher up, with the indispensable barley flour. But these Sedentary Fantzu lead a somewhat different life from the Chinese farmer, for besides cultivating their fields, they also raise animals. The yak serves them as mount and beast of burden and gives them milk and butter, which makes them less dependent on crops in bad years, and provides them with an inestimable source of health and energy in this cold mountain climate.

133 You are struck by these conditions if you travel from the provincial
361 capital of Lanchow south through the district of Ho-chou (modern name Lin-hsia) to the famous Labrang monastery which is south of the /5/ loess region in the mountains. You reach the valley of the T'ao-ho from the Huang-ho Valley by traveling through a loess region inhabited mainly by Mohammedans, and through a sparsely settled granite mountain range with a crest not quite 3,000 meters high. South of the T'ao-ho is a deeply furrowed loess landscape that reaches almost 3,000 meters. This is bounded on the other side by the Hsia-ho, and is inhabited by Mohammedans. In the Hsia-ho Valley the percentage of Chinese is again larger, but Mohammedanism has made more and more headway in the course of the last 30 years, partly after very bloody insurrections which were difficult to suppress. This is probably the main reason why the Chinese government has shifted the boundary between Kansu and Ch'inghai farther west.

Mewu

If you travel from Ho-chou up the wide, fertile valley of the Hsia-ho which cuts in between loess plateaus, you soon come to steep wooded mountains that are set off sharply from the loess country. The Hsia-ho breaks through these mountains in a narrow ravine, and leaves them behind at T'u-men-kuan. This is the present boundary between the district of Ho-chou and the recently demarcated district of Hsia-ho, which formerly belonged to the Tibetan province of Amdo. This district boundary, which is at the same time actually the boundary between loess country and rock mountains, has long formed an ethnic division between Chinese and Tibetans. The valley at Tu-men-kuan is closed off by an old wall, which may often have been the chief line of defense of the Chinese against an enemy breaking through from the high mountains. When I traveled through here at the end of August 1936, this barrier was occupied by a Mohammedan posse which aimed at defending it against the Communist army of Mao Tse-tung coming from Szechuan on its march to the north. However, the Communists did not advance toward Kansu through the Hsia-ho Valley, but /6/ proceeded farther east, because they were not equipped for the march through the Tibetan highlands which was to have led them to Sinkiang. They would have found the Mohammedans tough opponents, prepared to resist them with determination, although the weapons of this posse consisted almost entirely of spears decorated with red tassels.

Beyond Tu-men-kuan the Chinese and Mohammedans settle only in the principal valleys, and even there almost exclusively as traders who build small settlements along the caravan roads. They supply passing travelers and caravan drivers with food and shelter, sell all kinds of objects of daily use to the Tibetan country people, and for their part buy up farm products. For the rest, however, the region beyond Tu-men-kuan is settled mainly by Tibetans who have preserved their Tibetan culture relatively intact. A few kilometers up the valley we come upon the first Tibetan chorten and directly after that we pass the first lamasery. Two-days' journey above Tu-men-kuan, near the place where the Hsia-ho, rising in the undulating highland farther south, begins gnawing its way into the mountains, lies Labrang at an altitude of 2,950 meters.

The famous monastery of Labrang is a most important cultural and political center. It was founded in the 18th century during the reign of Ch'ien-lung who was interested in furthering Lamaistic religion. Labrang is now an important monastery city with many magnificent temples and countless courts for the lamas. There are said to be around 3,000 lamas and "living Buddhas" residing here.

Mewu

631 About one kilometer down the valley from this monastery city, a
443 small market town arose, inhabited mainly by Mohammedans. Nine
years ago the Chinese government made this the capital of the dis-
24| trict of Hsia-ho. Li An-che 5) gives a detailed description of Labrang.
231/7/ The Tibetans who live around Labrang are farmers. They grow
Tibetan barley in the Hsia-ho Valley and its lateral valleys. If con-
ditions are favorable, they also plant some wheat, as well as oats,
peas, broad beans, rape and flax. They also raise yaks, sheep, goats,
horses and pigs.

● 133 Not far south of Labrang the region of the high Tibetan steppe
begins. Its southern boundary toward Hsik'ang and Szechuan is
formed by the mighty Min-shan, a portion of the K'un-lun system.
West of Labrang are the highlands of the Ch'inghai Province (Kokonor).

133 Above 3,000 meters vegetation gradually comes to an end, not,
24| however peasant settlements. Even in the treeless, flat, trough-
231 shaped high valleys between 3,000 and 3,500 meters there are every-
361 where small villages of sedentary Tibetans. Here they grow Tibetan
barley and oats, often the two crops mixed, as well as rape. With
increasing altitude, cultivation gradually grows less, and from about
3,500 meters upward we find grassland inhabited only by stock
farmers. (1)

1. Cf Ekvall 4), page 29.

177 Although the Tibetans who live here are under Chinese adminis-
tration, they are nevertheless very independent of the Chinese, and
are not very much influenced by Chinese culture. They are divided
into individual tribes, one of which (the Mewu-Fantzu) we shall
describe more closely in the following account.

131 The territory of the Mewu-Fantzu lies south of the large lamasery
of He-tso (2) and east of the "old" city of T'ao-chou. The tribe

2. Tafel 2) Vol. II gives a good illustration of the He-tso monastery.

of the Mewu-Fantzu consists of sedentary as well as nomadic
Tibetans. /8/

123 After I had lived in Labrang and He-tso for some time, I visited
two monasteries belonging to the Mewu tribe: the old and the new
Mewu monasteries (Mewu-chiu-szu and Mewu-hsin-szu). Then I
pitched my tent 18 or 20 kilometers south of the latter monastery
in a shallow valley of about 3,950 meters elevation. On the slope

2: Rock K-5 (1934-) 1947 AF16 Southwest China AF16
Sino-Tibetan Border People AE3

PLATE 135. — THE MYSTERIOUS SACRED SPRING AT BBĚR-P'ĚR-DTĚR

北地寶泉

The spring is situated at an elevation of 8,650 feet in the center of a hill. The Bbĕr-p'ĕr-dtĕr sinter terraces owe their origin to this carbonate of lime-bearing spring. The white wooden rods surrounding the spring are *h'o-byu* on which are painted various *Lïŭ-mun* or Nāga, serpent spirits, whom the dto-mbo propitiate.

[p. 220-01]

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MP
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